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46.

695.







SACRED POEMS.

BY

MRS. BRUCE.

EDITED BY HER SON,

WILLIAM DOWNING BRUCE,

KNIGHT OF THE SOVEREIGN ORDER OF ST. JOHN; FELLOW OF THE
ROYAL SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON; VICE-PRESIDENT
OF THE LONDON GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY; MEMBER OF
THE COUNCIL OF THE BRITISH ARCHÆOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION, ETC. ETC.

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1846.

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PRINTED BY C. AND J. ADLARD,
BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.

TO
LADY KNIGHT BRUCE,

OF ROEHAMPTON PRIORY, IN THE COUNTY OF SURREY,

This Little Volume

IS INSCRIBED,

IN

TESTIMONY OF THE EDITOR'S GRATITUDE, RESPECT, AND ESTEEM.

*Charles Street,
St. James's Square, London ;
May 1846.*

P R E F A C E.

THESE Sacred Poems, with many others of my Mother's, have now lain for upwards of twenty years unpublished, save occasionally some few have been printed, particularly in the works of my much respected and valued friend John Walker Ord, Esq., of Guisborough.

Mr. Holland, in a very interesting work, comprising sketches of the lives, and specimens of the writings of about two hundred and fifty of the Poets of Yorkshire, from about the year 700 to the present time, has given a memoir of my Mother, and an account of some of her writings.

Many of the Sacred Poems were suggested to the author by reading Miss O'Keefe's Patriarchal Times.

W. DOWNING BRUCE,

CADET DE KENNET.

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SACRED POEMS.

JOSEPH.

THE day returns, which once to Egypt gave
A mighty ruler, in a foreign slave ;
The grated doors unbar, the wretched see
A female form, who cries—" Prisoners, be free !"
'Tis Asenath, a daughter of the land,
Who to the Ruler gave her heart and hand ;
And on this day receives from Egypt's king
His power and mandate, in his signet ring :
And with an angel's smile delights to see
The form long chained, rush forth to liberty.
She stands within the entrance of the ward,
Surrounded by the mighty ruler's guard,
In either hand appears a blooming child,
Rosy as health, as summer breezes, mild.
A brilliant diadem her tresses bound,
The robe of purple floated on the ground ;

Each sparkling gem was clasped upon her waist,
And Pharoah's ring her snowy finger graced.

"Look! my loved children," to the boys she cried,
"Look! and behold how vain all human pride:
Never from Virtue's paths your footsteps turn,
Lest in such dungeons *you*, like these, may mourn.
Be God's great laws engraven on each heart,
And from His precepts may you ne'er depart."
The boys hung trembling on their mother's vest,
While she with tenderness the cherubs blest.
The prisoners freed,—she sought her favorite bowers,
Where, with her lord, she passed her happiest hours :
Released from pomp, together here they prove
The dearest charm of undivided love.
Oft would they sit in twilight's softened ray,
And watch with smiles their blooming boys at play :
Or wander by the Nile, destined to save
The infant Moses from an early grave.
Asenath to her favorite bower withdrew,
Where every shrub and fragrant floweret grew ;
She called in haste a fair and gentle friend,
Who ever loved the princess to attend,—
"My Attila, thy footsteps quickly move,
Tell my loved lord I wait him in the grove."

"Vain is the mission, for these Hebrew men
In chains are brought to Egypt's land again ;

And in an hour, with fetters on each hand,
Before our mighty ruler they will stand."

—"Nay, Attila, thine ear hath been abused,
Of crime, these shepherds cannot be accused."

—"But one, the youngest, he with fingers bold
Hath seized thy husband's precious cup of gold."

—Asenath sighed: "Oh, most unhappy youth,
I could have pledged my life upon his truth!"

—"Last night, too, I've been told, thy generous lord
Feasted these strangers at his princely board;
Each seemed his courtesy, his smiles, to share,
But Benjamin engrossed the kindest care."

More had she said, but Pottiphera's call
Summon'd the princess to her father's hall.

She flew in haste to meet a sire so dear;

And he had tidings for her private ear.

Within the judgment hall of splendid state,

The mighty ruler of the Egyptians sate;

Upon his open brow dwelt shining truth,

Justice, and mercy, and yet blooming youth;

His form was dignified with manly grace,

And smiles of goodness shone upon his face:

No tale of sorrow could he hear unmoved,

The princely ruler was by all beloved.

A beauteous mourner at his throne appears,—

With anguish pale, and covered with her tears.

He rose in haste, bewildered with surprise,

"My Asenath, what mean these weeping eyes?"

—“ For justice in thy judgment hall I stand,
Against the ruler of the Egyptian land !”
—“ My much-loved partner !”—“ Cease, for I can prove
That thou no more deserv’st Asenath’s love.
Oh, how this heart, this glowing heart, adored
The virtue and the wisdom of its lord !
I proudly thought to me was surely given
The perfect work of all-creating Heaven :
And still,—oh ! turn away that radiant brow,
It breaks my heart to gaze upon it now.”
—“ My precious Asenath, what have I done ?”
—“ Nay, ’tis my father has accused his son.
From him I learnt that, at thy sole command,
A page received the goblet from thy hand ;
Which, in the sack of that poor Hebrew youth
Was placed unknown,—where now is Zaphnath’s truth ?”
—“ My dear, my virtuous wife ; far more my pride,
Than when I hailed thee as my wedded bride !
To yon recess withdraw, and thou shalt find
That yet unblemished is thy husband’s mind.”

The ruler she obeyed with trembling feet,
While he the Hebrew shepherds turn’d to meet.
—“ Is this the gratitude, the faith ye hold,
To steal my cup, my favorite cup of gold ?
Where is the guilty one ?”—“ Near thee he stands,
With looks of innocence and folded hands.”
—“ What he my favour vilely to repay
By theft ! the stripling quickly bear away,

In dungeon's gloom, with fetters be he bound,
And let his blood to-morrow dye the ground :
'The rest depart.'—" Oh, mercy, mercy, feel !
Lo ! at thy feet his wretched brethren kneel ;
Great is the guilt, but still in kindness spare
A form so gentle, and a face so fair."
—" Great God !" exclaimed the sad and suffering youth,
" Do ye then doubt your brother's heart and truth ?
Think ye I'm guilty of this deed abhorr'd ?
Think ye I robb'd proud Egypt's haughty lord ?"
Judah then spoke,— " Our lives, great ruler, here
We humbly offer, spare but this so dear.
Let Benjamin to our loved father hie,
Or, worn with grief, the aged man will die."
—" You may depart, your brother here remains ;
Naught now your presence in our land detains."
—" Oh ! no, with Benjamin alone we'll hie,
Or in thy country with our brother die.
Now do we feel, greatly offended Heaven !
How wise thy justice on the earth is given :
We suffer for our crimes, upon each head
Thy vengeance falls, for Joseph long since dead."
—" What crime ?"— " Great ruler, once we gladly gave
A brother kind and good to be a slave.
Yes, we our own, our youthful brother sold
To foreign lands, and took the merchant's gold ;
Because he lived e'en in our father's heart,
And we believed engrossed too large a part.

We justly suffer at the hands of God,
And bend beneath the wisdom of his rod."
With stifled sobs the generous ruler cries,
—" My kneeling brethren, arise, arise !
Nay, turn, thy much-lamented Joseph see,
Let your hearts whisper, I indeed am he !"
He clasped them all within his warm embrace,
While each with wonder gazed upon his face ;
Then bending down, with voices raised, adored
The power, the wisdom, mercy, of the Lord.
—Asenath flew, with soft emotions moved—
—" Oh ! more than worthy to be fondly loved !"
She sank o'er-power'd upon her husband's breast,
Who with his lips her fainting forehead pressed.
—" See, dearest brethren, in my grateful hand
I hold the lovely princess of the land."
—" Your brother's wife, his happy wife!" she cried,
"That is the title, dearest to my pride :
Your sister, too ; say will you let me share
Your kind affection, and your gentle care ?"
She smiled on all, but Benjamin she drew
To see her boys, who to their mother flew.
—" To-night we'll spread the feast ; at early morn
You shall to Canaan and your homes return :
Then hither all your wives your children bring,
Invited by our good and generous king.
To my loved sire these grateful tidings tell,
Your Joseph lives, safe, happy, noble, well !

Oh ! bring him quickly to my dear embrace,
That I once more may view a father's face."
That night they quaff'd the bowl, at early day
To Canaan's land they bend their cheerful way.
When they beheld their native land again,
They bade the youngest hasten o'er the plain ;
And with affection's mild and guarded care,
Their aged father for the news prepare.
Soon with delight the Patriarch's watchful ear
Caught the lov'd steps from infancy so dear.
He snatched the treasure to his aged breast,
And his lost Rachel's child again he blest.
" My darling boy ! art thou return'd, indeed ?
Is not my aching sight by joy deceived ?
Where are thy brethren ?"—" Soon they will be here,
To greet a parent whom they hold so dear.—
My precious mother, hast *thou* not a kiss
To give thy Benjamin, as sweet as this ?"
—The aged matron threw her arms around
The gentle youth, whom her affection own'd.
Softly her hands unclasp, " let me behold
Once more thy chain, thy mother's chain of gold."
—" Beloved Leah, I no longer wear
That chain so dear, of my lost mother's hair."
—" Hath it been stolen ? for thou couldst not part
With what appear'd so precious to thy heart."
—" No, I exchanged it for a beauteous robe,
By the fair hands of Egypt's princess wove."

—"Go from my sight," the aged Patriarch cried,
"No more my Benjamin, my hope and pride!"

—"Nay look, my father, see the colours gay,—
Why I will wear my lovely coat to-day."

—In Jacob's sight the robe he spread to view,
And deadly pale the wretched parent grew.

—"Oh! Benjamin, what hath thy madness done?
My murdered Joseph, dear lamented son!

Like his, that many-coloured coat appears,—
Oh! I shall choke with grief, with nature's tears."

—"Dear father, when my mother's chain I gave,
(Oh! gracious Lord, my father's senses save!)

To none but my own brother Joseph's hand
Did I bestow that dear, that sacred band."

—"Alas! the boy with ecstasy is wild;
Be more composed, dear Benjamin, my child."

—"Nay, it is true, I saw him with these eyes,
My brethren fly, our reverend father dies."—

Around the pious man his children flew,
And soon the blessed tidings Jacob knew.

—"Is he in Egypt? is my boy a slave?
Thanks, gracious God, that did my darling save."

—"Nay, he is great and noble,—Joseph stands
The princely ruler of the Egyptian lands."

—"What! he the powerful Zaphnath, who has given
To Egypt's king, the mandate sent from Heaven!

Oh! God in mercy let me live to see
My Joseph's face, before I come to thee."

The ruler met them at the city gate,
And all around the guards and nobles wait:
From his high chariot quickly did he spring,
And flew to Jacob on affection's wing.
No more the Patriarch's voice is calm and mild;
He sobbed aloud, "Great God, it is my child;
Again my much-loved Joseph's form I see,
Now take, most blessed Lord, my soul to thee.
My task on earth in happiness is done,
Since I have seen thy face, my son, my son."

The princely ruler of the Egyptian lands
Knelt lowly down, and kiss'd the patriarch's hands.
—"Oh! dearest father, honoured and adored,
Next to Jehovah, heaven's eternal Lord,
Once more thy pious blessing o'er me shed,
Those sacred hands bend o'er thy Joseph's head."
—"Bless thee, my child! thy father's latest prayer
Shall ask of Heaven to shield thee with its care;
Till full of honours, thou at last shalt rest
In peace, in happiness, on Abraham's breast."
—Again he sank in Joseph's dear embrace,
And tears of joy bedew his aged face.
The princess soon received the pious man,
And Joseph's children to their grandsire ran.
In peace he pass'd to everlasting rest,
And his last sigh was breathed on Joseph's breast.

JACOB AND ESAU.

ON one of Gilead's hills, both steep and high,
Three lovely children o'er the summit fly,
Like smiling angels, sent from worlds above,
The blessed messengers of heavenly love.
Their polished limbs were white as downy swans,
And their loose locks the gentle Zephyr fans.
Now they pursue the lizard bright and green ;
Another instant, gathering flowers, are seen :
Breathless at length their sports no more they keep,
But sink o'erpowered upon the grass to sleep.
Soon a loud voice disturbed their quiet rest,
They spring in haste from their moss-covered nest :
" 'Tis Gad, our brother, flying here with speed,—
Tidings of wonder in his face I read."
" Say, can you guess," cried Gad, " who o'er yon plain
Comes armed with strength, our parents to detain ?
'Tis Laban, full of every wrathful word ;
I trembled as each cruel speech I heard."

—“Alas !” the boys exclaim, “what can be done ?
Our grandsire surely will not harm his son !”
Towards the tent they turn their tearful eyes,
When lo ! a brilliant flame mounts to the skies.
—“See, a burnt offering to the God of Heaven,
Laban at length his children has forgiven !”
—With rapid feet towards the smoke they flew,
And to their grandsire’s knee with smiles they drew :
“Jacob,” he cried, “these children watch with care,
I know they all thy fond affection share ;
But some are gentle, others fierce and wild,
Be not, dear Jacob, by thy love beguiled ;
But weed the precious plants with wisdom’s hand,
And they around thee shall a phalanx stand.”
—“To your advice, my father, I’ll attend,
And my attention to your precepts lend.”
—“Farewell, my son, the brilliant orb of day
Now tells me I must homeward bend my way.”
He in his arms the pious Jacob press’d,
And every boy the aged grandsire bless’d.
Leah then claim’d her parent’s fond embrace ;
—“I look,” he cried, “to see my darling’s face,
My precious Rachel,—fly to her and tell,
Her weeping father waits to say farewell.”
—“Oh, my loved sire !” with sobs, with sorrow wild,
She rush’d to Laban, with her infant child ;
—“Bless me once more, in nature’s tenderest tone,—
Oh ! who will bless me when my father’s gone ?

Shall I again a parent live to see?
Oh! thy last kiss in fondness give to me.”
With grief, half choked, her fainting form he laid
Upon the bosom of her favorite maid;
And by his son attended, took the road
Which led to Paran’s calm and blest abode.
Before they part, an altar quick they raise,
And each returning, saw the offering blaze:
The youthful Reuben towards his father ran,
“ Oh! I have seen a sad, a wretched man,
Eating wild fruit, and at each word he hears,
His face is covered with new floods of tears;
To me the stranger has his sorrow told—
A merchant seized his camels and his gold;
And then with savage feeling drew his blade,
And at the Hittite’s head a blow he made.
Deep is the cut, alas! my blood runs cold
To see it now—will you this man behold?”
He took his father’s hand, beneath a tree
The wretched Samaloh did Jacob see.
With words of kindness soon he calm’d his mind,
And told him in his tents a home to find.
Jacob then sought his gentle Rachel’s bower,
For o’er his heart she held unbounded power;
There he beheld his children sporting round,
And his two wives in friendly converse found:
“ How different is our Paran from this wild!”
Rachel exclaim’d, “ Oh! since I was a child,

I've thought my native fields, my father's grove,
Would, next to living objects, claim my love."
Simeon then spoke,—“I do not like this plain,
Would we were all on Paran's hills again!”
“When we arrive in Canaan's fertile groves,
Each will behold what best his fancy loves.
Rachel the cultured garden there will find,
And woods and mountains suit my Simeon's mind.
There, too, a valley will delight your eyes,—
I used to call that place my Paradise.
It seemed, in boyhood's happy view, to bring
The charms, the sunshine, of eternal spring.
The grapes hung clustering on each slender vine;
Myrtles and roses there in union twine:
The woodbine climbs around the spreading trees,
And Nature's charms the fancy well can please.
Oft have I sat upon the moss-raised throne,
And wished to reign in that sweet spot alone;
The moon above my head with softened rays,
While at my feet the murmuring water plays.
The snowy swans, upon the neighbouring height,
Would to this river bend their rapid flight,
And in its bosom dip their silver wings;
While from each leafy spray the blackbird sings.
Oh, happy age, when flowers, and fruit, and birds,
Delight and pleasure to the heart affords!
They could not *now* enchant my raptured eye,
For *living flowers* and *blossoms* would be by.”

“ Oh ! I shall love this vale,” young Reuben said,
“ Which oft hath been my father’s leafy bed.”
“ And thou, my child, wilt *thou* not hail the grove
Where once thy father used in peace to rove ?”
“ In Canaan’s land I have but one desire,”
Judah replied to his attentive sire,
“ Show me Mount Moriah,—let me kiss the sod
Where Abraham offer’d up his son to God !”
Jacob with pride gazed on the blooming youth,
Whose brow was stamp’d with innocence and truth.
“ Point out, at Bethel, that remember’d stone
Where thou didst sit, a wanderer and alone,
That all our children may with one accord
Kneel and adore the goodness of the Lord :
Flowers we will strew upon the sacred ground
Where our dear husband God’s protection found.
But see, my lord, thy messengers appear ;
What tidings bring they from the Prince of Seir ?”
With beating hearts the family all crowd
Without the tent, these words are spoke aloud,—
“ Oh ! fly to Paran, to your homes again,
For Esau comes, with twice five hundred men.”
Like a tall cedar, full of strength and pride,
Which long the storms of winter have defied,
While round the trunk myrtles and roses twine,
And from its vigour all beneath it shine ;
The hour is come, the royal tree must fall,
So full of majesty, so green, so tall ;

The blow is given, still fierce erect it stands,
At length the *core* is touched by savage hands,—
Then falls the powerful tree across the earth,
Crushing the plants to which it once gave birth ;
While they endeavour with each tender stem
To prop the drooping cedar up again ;—
So Jacob's wives and children round him stand,
Leah and Rachel press each death-cold hand.
—“ Oh ! speak, dear husband, 'tis thy Rachel's voice,
Which once could make my Jacob's heart rejoice.”
—“ Where am I ? Oh ! the dreadful hour is come,
And I must now prepare to meet my doom.
Esau, thy vengeance be upon my head,
But let the sinner's blood alone be shed ;
Oh ! spare these innocents,—are all around ?”
He wildly cried, and sprung from off the ground ;
“ Come all and take a last, a fond embrace,
Let me once more gaze on each dear-loved face.
Oh ! be ye blest, most precious gifts of God,
And I alone feel the Avenger's rod.”
He told his servants to select with care
The fattest herds, and sheep, and lambkins fair,
That he an offering might to Esau make,
If he a brother's gift would deign to take.
He ranged his treasures with a trembling hand,
And in the rear his wives and children stand.
Sudden a trumpet sounds, then loud and strong
A burst of warlike music sweeps along ;

A hovering dove which heard th' unusual sound
At Jacob's feet fell panting to the ground.
He saw the blessed omen which was given,
And, grateful, bent in thankfulness to Heaven.
Quickly the plain with warriors is o'erspread,
And stern each soldier raised his haughty head ;
Their flying coursers bound with rapid feet,
And now the warriors and the shepherds meet ;
The soldiers halt, and from their martial bands
Before the trembling group a figure stands,
So full of majesty, of grace, and pride,
He might assembled thousands have defied ;
His form was cast in Nature's strongest mould,
Which awed the wicked and repress'd the bold,
His glossy hair, black as the raven's wing,
Curled round a brow where shone perpetual spring ;
Each noble feeling glow'd upon his face,
As from his steed he leapt with manly grace :
His eyes are turned upon the assembled crowd
Who humbly to the godlike chieftain bow'd ;
At length they fix upon a drooping form
With grief, and anguish, and repentance worn,
A face which once was spread with beauty's bloom
Now withering seem'd, just sinking to the tomb.
The generous Esau caught the downcast eye,
And to the mourner did the chieftain fly,
His powerful feelings he no more repress'd,
But snatched the banish'd outcast to his breast.

With joy the trembling Jacob's senses fled,
And Esau's arms support his brother's head ;
Upon his neck the fainting form he kept,
And the proud Warrior o'er the Shepherd wept.
" Revive, my brother, look, thy Esau's here,
Who holds thee, Jacob, as his heart's blood dear."
Jacob soon heard these tones, so soft, so sweet,
And fell with gratitude at Esau's feet :
He gently raised him, and again his face
Is buried in a brother's dear embrace.
Oh ! pure Affection, soother of each pain,
Without thy aid our blessings would be vain ;
Thou canst the heart for Sorrow's pangs repay,
And soften Misery by thy heavenly ray ;
Can cheer with smiles the sufferer's aching breast,
And make the heart that feels thee doubly blest.
—The wives of Jacob next are Esau's care,
And in his arms he press'd each matron fair ;
The children he caress'd with smiles of love,
And every object seem'd his heart to move.
" Jacob, my brother, I remember well
When thou in Canaan didst delight to dwell,
How we together bounded o'er the plain,
And we will wander there ere long again ;
The grove thou plantedst is my favorite bower,
And none dare pluck from thence a single flower.
Remember'st thou my wife ?"—" Oh ! she will spurn
Thy brother and his wives when they return."—

“Nay, she is dead, and now a gentler bride
Graces with modest truth thy Esau’s side,
The child of Ishmael, and her lovely face
Is, like Asara’s, full of female grace ;
Through me she greets thee, and with smiles of love,
A sister’s welcome all from her will prove.
Is yon thy firstborn ? Oh ! he soon will wing
The pointed arrow, and the jav’lin fling,
He looks a warrior ; but tell me whose the hand
That holds yon smiling pair in flowing band ?” —
“ ’Tis a poor Hittite who has been beguiled,
Found in the woods almost with terror wild ;
But from his lips thou shalt his sufferings hear,
They from my eyes have drawn the pitying tear.” —
“ I will revenge thee,” Esau proudly cried,
His form assuming all the warrior’s pride,
“ If on the earth this merchant can be found,
If he inhabit still one foot of ground.
Take, Samalah, my precious signet ring,
And hold it till the traitor’s head I bring !” —
Scarce had he spoke when loud a cry was heard,
And Esau’s soldiers sought their warlike lord.
“ A stranger craves, beloved chief, thine ear.” —
“ Before us let him instantly appear.” —
But when Samalah did the stranger see,
In terror’s tones he cried “ Oh, God ! ’tis he,
My cruel foe !” — “ Behind me, trembler, stand,
Thou canst not fear, protected by my hand.” —

The merchant spoke—" I seek the chief of Seir,
A suppliant at his feet I now appear ;
This morn I was possess'd of countless gold,
My riches, merchandise, could scarce be told ;
The Amorites, a wild and lawless band,
Have snatch'd the treasure from my powerless hand.
Great Esau, lead thy warriors o'er the plain,
And, crown'd with conquest, win my wealth again ;
I've heard that Justice to thy heart is dear,—
Espouse my cause, most noble Prince of Seir."
" I cannot go, but here is one at hand
Who will for me lead forth my warlike band."
Samalah's eye the merchant could not meet,
He sank with guilty fears at Esau's feet.
" Oh, Mercy ! Mercy !"—" Thou shalt mercy feel
From this all powerful and avenging steel ;
Thou couldst reject this Hittite's humble prayer,
And now my vengeance thou shalt fully share."
He raised his arm,—Jacob inclined his head,
" Oh ! had he thus met me," he trembling said ;—
But ere the blow descends Samalah flew
And gently Esau's hand to his he drew ;
" Before you met your brother, mighty chief,
" I was o'erwhelm'd with misery and with grief ;
' As Esau deals by Jacob,' then I said,
' So shall my debt to Marathon be paid,'
The rays of Mercy beam'd upon thy brow,
And *thy* example *I* but follow now."

He stretched his hand—" Beneath the eye of Heaven,
Thy sins, Marathon, are by me forgiven ;
So long as Justice, Mercy, Truth, are dear,
Nations unborn shall bless the Prince of Seir,
Who raised the erring to his generous breast,
And his repentant brother nobly blest."



ISHMAEL.

THRICE hath the sun sank down beneath the wave,
Since Abraham parted with his faithful slave ;
By Sarah's arts, too fatally beguiled,
He banished Hagar and her lovely child—
The youthful Ishmael, full of playful grace,
Whose raven ringlets curl'd around his face.
How could the father from this cherub part ?
How break the cords that bound him to his heart ?
Could Nature, holy Nature, plead in vain,
And must they wander o'er the burning plain ?
Could Abraham from his breast those treasures send,
Without an earthly guide, an earthly friend ?
Yes—for the mandate was to Abraham given
By Him who reigns on high, the God of Heaven.
At His command the wanderers left their home,
And now are in the desert wilds alone ;
With savage beasts, which fill the neighbouring wood,
Where Hagar prays for water, and for food.

Vain, vain her prayer, no cooling stream appears,
And Hagar sheds despair's o'erwhelming tears ;
Where'er she turns, still does this plaintive cry
Assail her ear—" My mother, quickly fly,
Bring me some water, or I die, I die !" }
Beneath a tree she left her sleeping child,
And turn'd away, with grief, with anguish wild.
" I cannot close my Ishmael's dying eyes ;
I cannot watch the spirit as it flies.
Oh ! God in pity take my soul with his,
That we may meet in thy pure world of bliss."
She ceased—a radiant vision met her sight,
Array'd in shining robes of dazzling light :
Hagar arose, in mute devotion awed,
For well she knew the angel of the Lord.
" Hagar," he cried, " why dost thou idly weep ?
Thy Ishmael lives, wrapt in the arms of sleep ;
'Tis God's decree the boy should rise to fame,
And nations bless young Ishmael's glorious name ;
Behold !" he pointed with his azure wing,
Where flow'd a pure and salutary spring ;
" There drink, and know that I thy steps attend,
At God's command, thy guardian, and thy friend."
He gently vanish'd, but on Ishmael smiled,
And blest the slumber of the beauteous child.
The air was fill'd with balmy sweets afar,
And round the vision shone each brilliant star ;
From his pure bosom dropp'd celestial balm,
And pity's smile the griefs of Hagar calm.

She raised a piercing cry when from the well
The sparkling drops of blessed water fell ;
To Ishmael's lips the cooling drink she gave,
Her Ishmael lately sinking to the grave :
The precious drops are worth a nation's wealth,
For Ishmael blooms again with rosy health,
And springs delighted to his mother's breast,
Who to her heart the treasure closely press'd—
And bending low, with humble voice, adored
The great, the wond'rous mercy of the Lord,
Who o'er the burning plain and savage wild,
Had led, and saved the wanderer and her child :
Who watches all with kind paternal care,
And ne'er forgets the weeping mourner's prayer.
Before young Ishmael left his father's bowers,
Amongst the woods one day he sought for flowers,
And there beheld a hunter tired and pale,
Who told the boy his sad and mournful tale ;
Shew'd him his wife, his wretched children there,
Dying for food, surrounded by despair :
The pitying Ishmael flew, with ready hand,
Where plenty covered all his father's land,
He seized the choicest meat, the richest wine,
Press'd from the juice of Abraham's favorite vine :
These to the children of the wood he gave,
And saved the wretched from the opening grave.
It chanced the wanderer now was dwelling near
The place where Hagar and her son appear.

Huts they had formed within the shelter'd wood,
And there the hunter found his daily food ;
In peace they lived, far from the haunts of men,
A lovely bower within a lovely glen.
The hunter Nehaza had heard the cry
From Hagar's lips, and to the spot drew nigh,
When he beheld the saviour of his life,
The youth who fed his children and his wife,
Dying for bread, a wandering outcast driven,
Though not forsaken by the hand of Heaven.
" Oh, blessed boy," the pious hunter said,
As bending down he raised young Ishmael's head,
" Is it for thee o'er desert wastes to roam,
Far from thy father's tents, thy peaceful home ?"
" Oh ! dearest Nehaza, once more I see
A human being will be kind to me,
Raise this loved parent from the cold damp ground,—
Look, dearest mother, I've a father found :
Yes, thou wilt be my father in this wild,
Thou wilt protect the mother and her child."
Upon the hunter's neck he laid his head,
And there the tears of warm affection shed.
" Protect thee, aye, with life," Nehaza cried ;
" I'll watch thy steps with all a father's pride.
Thy mother too, our humble meal shall share,
And both shall be Nehaza's fondest care."
He called his children, who, with one accord,
Received and owned young Ishmael for their lord.

Oh, Gratitude! how seldom doth thy ray,
Illumine *here* our dark and gloomy way;
Thy warmest beam to Nehaza was given,
It fell a brilliant drop direct from Heaven.
For Hagar soon he raised a simple bower,
And round it bloomed each sweetly-scented flower;
He taught the youth to bend the swift-winged bow,
And soon his dart would bring the eaglet low;
The world's dark frown they now no more can move,
Content they dwell a family of Love.—

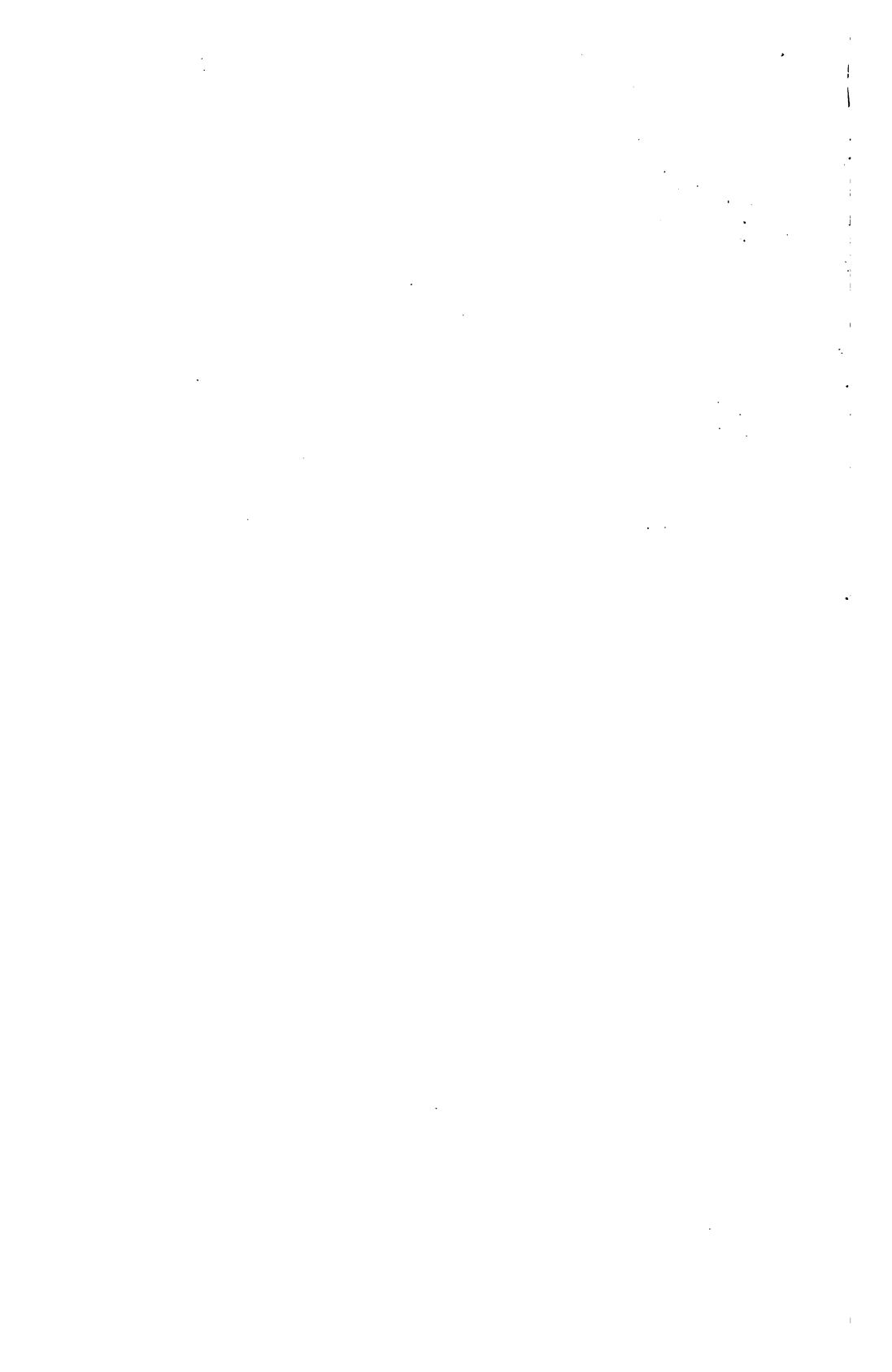
Years now had passed, and still is Ishmael seen
To climb the mountains, or bound o'er the green;
Companion of his sports, where'er he run,
The gentle Eziel, Nehaza's young son,
Together o'er the rock they bend their way,
Scarce waiting for the glorious orb of day.
Ishmael's strong limbs were cast with manly grace:
A warrior's figure, and a warrior's face.
A lion's skin across his breast was flung,
And o'er his back the well-charged quiver hung:
He looked a youthful war god from on high,
Bearing a mission from his native sky.
Not long they roamed the thickly tangled wood,
When they beheld a lion seeking food,
Quickly an arrow Ishmael from him flung,
And at his breast the kingly monster sprung;

The warrior's arm no human strength could meet,
And soon the breathless monster's at his feet.
He tore the skin with all a hunter's pride,
"This," he exclaim'd, "shall deck my youthful bride."—
Eziel smiled—"Say, Ishmael, dost thou fear
To meet the maid, now that the hour draws near?
Hagar will soon return; my father too,
Nay, perhaps this day again they'll bless our view:
Yes, they will bring a wife from Egypt's land,
To share my brother's heart, and claim his hand."—
"Wife!" Ishmael cried, "how strange to me the word,
Say, can a maiden love so wild a lord?—
Eziel, thou art of softer, gentler mould,
Not half so resolute, so fierce, or bold;
Come, let our arrows at yon plover dart,
Who kills the bird, shall win the virgin's heart."—
Careless they turned, and sought their sylvan bowers,
When lo! each hut was decked with sweetest flowers;
A feast was spread within the coolest grove,
And all around breathed harmony and love.
"My mother is returned," the warrior cried;
"And I must learn to woo this foreign bride."—
Scarce from his lips escaped each muttered word,
When Hagar led him to a man of God.
"See, holy Priest, this is my warrior son,
For whom Azara's hand my suit hath won:
Welcome to Paran, friends, each gentle word
Of welcome give the chosen of your lord."

Around the lovely maid with smiles they come,
And proudly bear her to her destined home.
And, Ishmael, where is he ? entranced he stands,
Nor from amazement's clasp withdraws his hands :
Never before had he beheld a face
So full of loveliness, of female grace ;
From her soft form his eyes no more can move—
“ O God,” he cried, “ I own the power of love !”
The maiden raised her bright and modest eyes,
But quickly turned with terror and surprise ;
For Ishmael's hands still showed the lion's gore,
Covered with blood, the belt, the bow he wore.
Fierce was his look, she hid her glowing face
Within the shelter of her sire's embrace.
Ishmael with anguish saw this proof of fear,
And in her eye beheld the trembling tear :
Again the maiden raised her drooping head,
And doubt, dismay, and terror, quickly fled ;
She saw the form of Grace, though bold and wild,
She saw the brow of Beauty, and she smiled.
In ecstasy he caught that blessed beam,
So fair, so bright, it seemed a passing dream ;
He snatched the turban from Azara's brow,
That he might see her eyes and breathe his vow.
“ Speak, let me hear thy voice,” the warrior said—
She turned to Hagar and inclined her head,
“ My much loved mother.”—“ Mother !” Ishmael cried,
“ Then thou wilt yet consent to be my bride.

Call me but husband, and to thee I'll bring
The plumage from the towering eagle's wing :
Call me but husband, and the boundless sea
Shall pour its gems, its treasures, all for thee :
Call me but husband, and each monarch's pride
Shall bend to thee my young, my blooming bride."—
" Oh ! Ishmael, what is power compared with thee ?
Thy smile is more than gold, than gems to me."—
He caught the fair one to his glowing breast,
And on her cheek the tearful kiss impressed.
The gentle Eziel whispered, " Ishmael, say,
Shall we fling arrows for the maid to-day ?"—
Ishmael replied not, for in haste he hied
To bathe his blood-stained limbs and please his bride.
Soon he returned and raised the nuptial song,
Then led the maiden 'midst the gazing throng :
The hoary priest pronounced the solemn word
Which joined them in the presence of the Lord.
The guardian angel of this desert wild,
Beheld in manhood's bloom that fainting child
Whom once he bless'd, when on his radiant way
He flew obedient from the realms of day.
The angel hovered o'er the assembled crowd,
Who prostrate fell and glorified the Lord ;
He scattered perfumes from his snowy wing,
And breath'd around the choicest sweets of spring.
He raised his hands, and in an earnest prayer
Blessed with his heavenly lips the youthful pair.

At those loved sounds they raise the grateful cry,
And breathe this prayer to him who reigns on high :—
“ Most gracious God, Thou surely wilt receive
The purest incense which our hearts can give ;
The offering of our duty and our love,
Sacred to Thee, our Guardian Friend above.
Oh ! be each voice in holy measure raised,
Be God’s abundant mercy hourly praised ;
And from all lips these words be daily given,
Glory to God, who rules both Earth and Heaven !”



REBEKAH.

COME, blooming nymphs, your gayest vestures wear,
Twine summer garlands in your flowing hair !
Come, smiling youths, let silken scarfs adorn
Your manly limbs on this auspicious morn :
This joyful day, the guardians of the sheep,
With mirth, with music, and with pastime keep !
Laban, the wealthiest of the country round,
Saw his white flocks spread o'er the neighbouring ground :
The choicest fruit and herbs, and savoury meat,
The youthful group around his table eat :
He bade his sister raise her tuneful voice
Which ever made the listener's heart rejoice,—
Rebekah's strain in grateful hymns was given
For all the blessings of indulgent Heaven,
Which had bestowed, with kind and liberal hand,
Plenty and richness o'er the smiling land.
The hymn of gladness done, Rebekah cried
“ Where is young Ashdel and his plighted bride ?”

One of the damsels spoke, " Alas, I fear
They will not grace our festival this year :
Ashdel has lost from Zideon's flock some sheep,
Which, as his shepherd, he was bound to keep ;
They stray'd, while he his mother's pillow smooth'd,
And her last pangs his filial bosom soothed.
Old Zideon has, with cruel, savage hand,
Seized on his cottage, furniture, and land :
And robb'd of all, poor Ashdel now must roam
Far from Taphanes and his native home ;
But see, Rebekah, in yon southern grove,
The wretched shepherd flies to meet his love."
Rebekah to the weeping Ashdel flew,
Who to the maiden, with emotion, drew.
" Dear friend, my hopes, my happiness are gone,
And I must wander through the world alone."—
" Nay, Ashdel, still old Zideon may relent,
And of his tyranny may yet repent :
Shall I, dear Ashdel, try persuasion's power ?
I'll seek the miser ere another hour."—
" My kind Rebekah, vain all friendship's aid,
I must leave Paran—leave my much-loved maid."—
" Hear me, dear youth, and to my suit attend,
If thou reject it, still I am thy friend :
Ere the sun rise, my words on thee can shower,
Wealth, happiness, a fair and lovely bower,
Sheep, colts, and hives of busy humming bees,
A life of calm content—of peaceful ease."

The shepherd raised his sad and drooping head,
And with a smile of wonder quickly said :
“ Dearest Rebekah, can such hopes be sent,—
Can I become the favorite of content ?
I have a friend, pure as the morning dew,
With auburn locks, and eyes of softest blue ;
A form of grace, a temper sweet and mild,—
I’ve loved the maiden since I was a child :
Oft hath she said, ‘ if I become a bride,
Ashdel alone shall grace my wedded side :’
Wealth she can claim.”—“ Say, wilt thou, Ashdel, prove
With her the joys of sweet domestic love ?”—
“ And does Rebekah take this cruel part—
Does *she* with insult wound a bleeding heart ?
A heart which long has pledged its faith and truth
To the beloved companion of my youth.
Not all the wealth the greatest monarchs hold,
Not all the charms of soul-subduing gold
Could shake my constancy, decrease my love,
Or bid my heart from its Taphanes rove.
My dying mother, with her latest prayer,
Gave the dear maiden solely to my care ;
Hadst thou beheld her bending o’er the bed
Where my poor mother’s drooping form was laid !
With softened voice she soothed each earthly fear,—
Oh, my Taphanes, *there* thou wert most dear !
Rebekah, if thy heart had ever loved,
Thou wouldst not thus my constancy have proved.

First-love alone is pure without a stain,
The heart can never fondly love again ;
One holy shrine will in the bosom rest,
And only one within a faithful breast.
True love's a steady, bright, unchanging ray,
And not the idle preference of a day ;
A fadeless flower which will for ever bloom
Through years, in absence, and beyond the tomb.
Farewell ! may peace Rebekah's steps attend,
May she escape the sorrows of her friend."
The shepherd turned,—Rebekah homeward flew
And to a secret bower her brother drew ;
She told him all, and begged that he would try
The shepherd's cottage and his fields to buy,
Stock them with sheep and herds within the fold,
And in exchange heed not our useless gold.
Laban, delighted, press'd his sister's hand,—
And soon she owned the shepherd's house and land.—
In a thick grove at twilight's softest hour,
Two faithful hearts droop 'neath misfortune's power :
The shepherd to his much-loved maiden cried
“ Wilt thou e'er walk again by Ashdel's side ?
Oh, my Taphanes, when from thee I part,
Peace will no more dwell in my breaking heart !
And should I wander over wilds unknown,
That heart with thee must ever find its home.
Say, wilt thou think of me at evening's hour,
And pray for Ashdel, in this sacred bower ?

The youths are rich in Paran's happy land,
Many will sue, Taphanes, for thy hand;
Ashdel is poor, a wandering outcast driven,
Not one more wretched 'neath the eye of heaven ;
Oh ! canst thou faithful to thy shepherd prove."—
" And dost *thou*, Ashdel, doubt my heart and love ?
Each youth with cold indifference I shall see,—
Affection's softest beam will cling to thee.
But now the hour is come and we must part,
Ashdel, beloved possessor of my heart !"
The tears of anguish stream upon her face,
Her arms extend to give a last embrace.
Quick as a fawn a lovely maiden flew,
And on the damsel's neck *herself* she threw,
" See, dear Taphanes, who my steps attend,—
Thou shouldst have told those sorrows to thy friend."
The youthful pair with wonder raise their eyes
And gaze around, bewildered with surprise ;
A smiling group of all the village train
Had followed Laban o'er the grassy plain,
In bridal robes, with white and flowing vests,
And bands of roses flung across their breasts.
" Taphanes, choose a bridegroom from this band,
Each youth with rapture will receive thy hand !
The cottage in the valley now is thine,
There thou wilt teach each fragrant flower to twine,
Blessed with unfading peace in virtue dwell,
Though not with him whom thou hast loved so well :

Ashdel, this morning, in the southern grove,
Proudly refused, through me, thy offer'd love !
Say, Ashdel, are Rebekah's words untrue ?
I told thee I a lovely maiden knew,
Graceful and rich, who oft to me had cried
To none but Ashdel will I e'er be bride :
"Dost thou reject her still ?"—"Rebekah, words are weak
My heart's enraptured feelings now to speak !"
At the fair maiden's feet the lovers knelt,
And every heart around them seemed to melt.
"Rise, my loved friends, Rebekah is o'erpaid
By giving Ashdel to his faithful maid !
Strike the loud harp, the marriage rites prepare,
We all your wedding feast intend to share."—
"Generous Rebekah, you will one day prove
How strong the claim of undivided love.
When one dear object fills that virtuous heart,
If you are doomed in agony to part,—
Oh, may the peace, the blessing thou hast given,
Be *largely then* repaid by bounteous Heaven !"

DAVID.

WITHIN yon splendid tent lies Israel's king,
While round his couch the sweetest minstrels sing,—
Vain, vain their skill, to soothe his restless mind,
No charm in music's spell the king can find.
He waved his hand—the obedient train are gone,
Abner remains with royal Saul alone.
“ I'm weary, general, of this glittering state,—
Why was I made a monarch, high and great ?
Once I was happy in my quiet home,
And calmly slept far from this splendid dome ;
The crown of Israel is a weight of care,
Heavy the brow that must the bauble wear !
And now, to torture me, defy my power,
Goliath's challenge sounds at noon-tide hour.
Oh, might some arrow to the giant wing
Its rapid flight, how blest were Israel's king !
Is there no soldier in my martial band,
Who as one champion valiantly dare stand ?”—

“ Most gracious sire, no single arm alone
Can meet the giant, and defend thy throne,—
His powerful strength can hurl destruction round,
His hand with heaps of dead bestrew the ground ;
Our sole reliance we must place on heaven,
And pray that *equal* strength to us be given.”—
“ Go, Abner, and proclaim once more aloud,
Through martial ranks, among the assembled crowd,
What power and honour shall surround his head
Who sends Goliath to the silent dead ;
And if this glorious act, general, be done,
I will receive the warrior for my son,—
The hand of Milcah shall be his alone
Who fights for Israel and her monarch’s throne.”
“ Oh, king,” the brave and faithful Abner cried,
“ Shall Milcah be thy gallant champion’s bride ?
That prize indeed might warm the coldest breast,
Who wins the maid will be supremely blest :
Yes, she is fair, and every gentle grace
Plays o’er her form, and smiles upon her face ;
He to whom Milcah’s virtuous heart is given,
Must be the favorite son of partial heaven :
Quickly the heralds shall declare thy will,
And may some noble youth this monster kill.”
Abner retired and sought the martial band,—
All wished to gain the lovely Milcah’s hand ;
But none the giant’s challenge durst defy,—
Who met the monster would most surely die.

'T was near the hour when with defiance loud,
Goliah's voice was heard among the crowd,—
The wretched Saul fled from the light of day,
Humbled, subdued, upon his couch he lay,—
No more ambition, with her powerful art,
Fill'd every corner of the monarch's heart,
He felt his splendour vain, *one man* alone
Could awe the nation, and shake Israel's throne.
Far from this busy scene, in Bethlehem's groves,
The youthful David as a shepherd roves;
Gentle his manners, mild as twilight's hours,
He dwelt, beloved, within his father's bowers,
Where on the harp he daily there adored,
In songs of praise, the goodness of the Lord :
Active his life, and round his youthful head
Heaven's choicest gifts abundantly were shed ;
The incense of his prayers flew up on high,
And gained admittance in the vaulted sky.
The aged Jesse had three sons afar
In Israel's camp, distinguished in the war,
The anxious father longed some news to hear
Of sons who were most cherished and most dear,—
He summoned David, and the shepherd sent
To carry greetings to the royal tent,
Presents of fruit, and flasks of generous wine
Prest from the juice of many a clustering vine ;
His blessing, too, the pious Jesse gave,
And pray'd that heaven his gallant sons would save ;

“David,” he cried, “thou quickly must return,
Nor let thy father for his youngest mourn ;
The noisy camp will not thy nature please,
Who lov’st the quiet path of peaceful ease ;
From the Philistine’s tent with caution fly,
God will protect thee with his watchful eye.”
David set forth, in minstrel habit dress’d,
Green was his waving plume, his flowing vest ;
His harp across his back the shepherd flung,
His auburn locks in graceful ringlets hung ;
Slight was his form, moulded by beauty’s hand,
The fairest youth in Israel’s peopled land ;
He look’d a spirit sent from worlds above
To sing the blessings of Jehovah’s love.
Near Israel’s camp, within a secret bower,
A wretched female wept each passing hour,
Her sobs the shepherd heard, and sought the shade
Where on the grass reclined a beauteous maid
The waving purple and the brilliant ring
Bespoke the daughter of proud Israel’s king :
She rose in terror at the intrusion bold,
And strove to speak in words severe and cold ;
But when she caught the bright and heavenly smile—
That seem’d her woes, her misery, to beguile ;
She stood entranced, and thought no earthly guest
Her lowly bower with his pure presence blest.
“What is thy grief? oh, most enchanting maid !”
In softest tones the youthful shepherd said,

"Tell me thy sorrow and I'll quickly fly
To bring relief, or in the effort die."—
"Art thou of earthly mould? beneath the skies
So fair a vision never charm'd mine eyes,—
Thou must be minstrel at the gates of heaven,
To sing the hymn of joy when man's forgiven."—
"A simple shepherd, I have come afar
To greet my brethren, soldiers in the war :
But tell me, lovely maid, why flow those tears,
Why heaves thy breast with such o'erwhelming fears?"—
"Alas ! my father has proclaim'd," she cried,
"That I shall be his champion's willing bride
If but Goliath's challenge he defy,
And 'neath his hand this hateful monster die.
Oh ! should some warrior's faithful arrow wing
Its fatal dart, and thus avenge the king,
Be he more savage than the beasts which rove,
I must receive with smiles the conqueror's love.
Oh, cruel father ! sure within thy breast
Some tender feeling yet will find a rest !
Thou blessed stranger, would that thou couldst dart
A pointed javelin to the giant's heart !
Hark ! even now I hear Goliath's cry,—
Insulting wretch, he does the king defy !"——
David with flying footsteps sought the plain—
To meet the giant, now his only aim ;
He found his brethren, they with much surprise
Beheld the shepherd youth before their eyes :

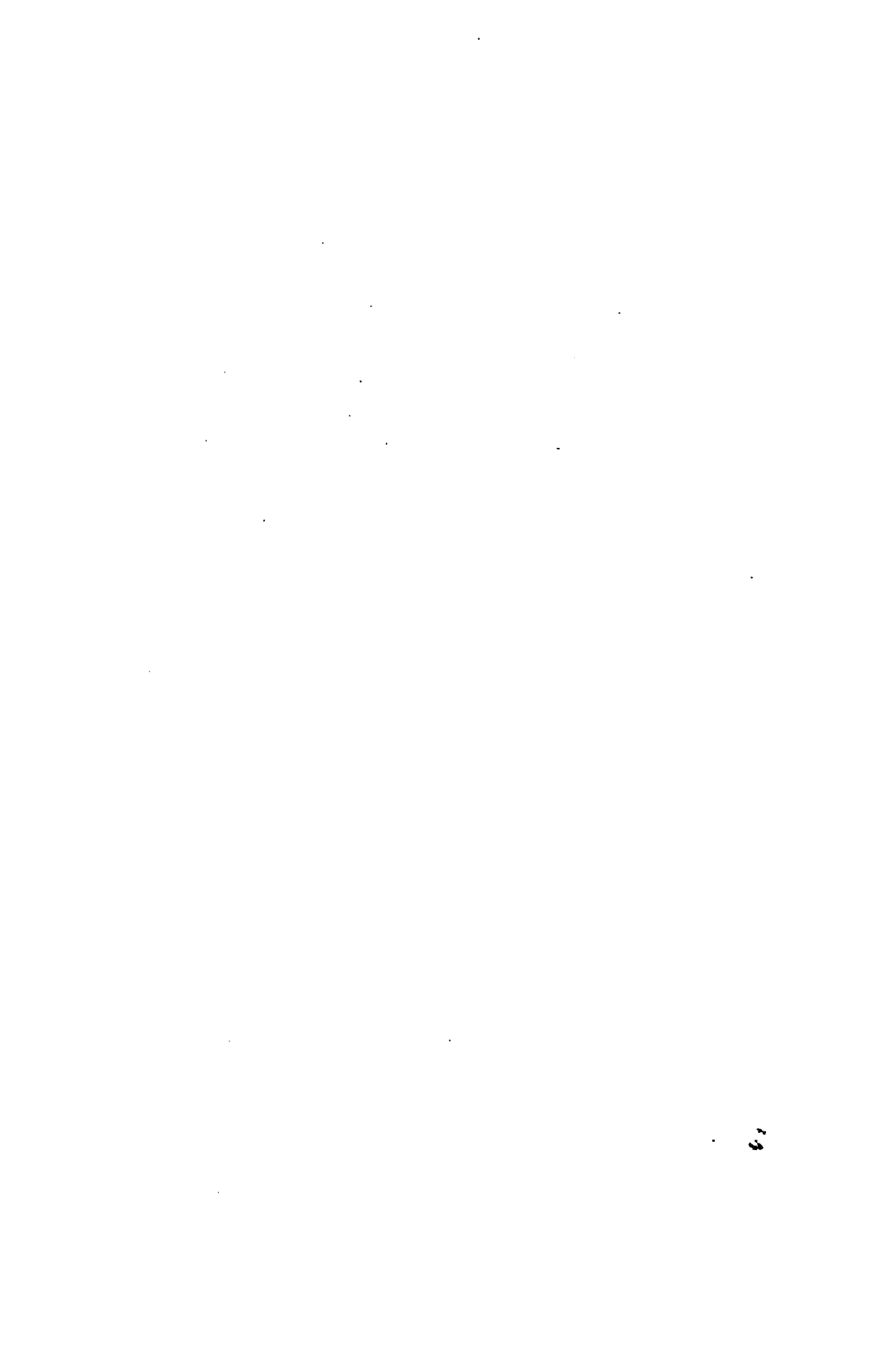
“ Beloved brethren, lead me to the king,
I will engage Goliath’s head to bring,
If he will promise, by his sacred hand,
To join me to the princess of the land.”—
“ The boy is mad—what, such a thing as thou !
The foe would crush thee at a single blow.”
Abner was near, and mark’d young David’s mien,—
A lovelier form the general ne’er had seen ;
He took the shepherd’s hand and gently said,
“ Oh! who could wound, could crush, that graceful head ?
’Twere madness with the giant to contend,
Take the advice of one who is thy friend.”—
“ Bear me to Saul,—it is my only prayer,
To win his favour, now my earnest care.”
The general led him to the drooping king,
“ Behold a champion, royal Saul, I bring !”—
“ Where is the warrior, let me view his face,
And clasp the hero in my firm embrace.”—
“ Here is the youth.”—“ What ! dost thou mock my woe?
Quick from my presence, cruel Abner, go.”—
“ Hear me, oh, king ! I boast no powerful hand,
Protected by the strength of Heaven I stand ;
God’s arm, His wisdom, and His will alone
Can save my country, and defend thy throne.
By *Him* supported I thy foe will meet,
And bring his head an offering to thy feet.”—
“ Go, noble youth, as Israel’s champion stand ;
Go and defend thy sov’reign and his land,—

“The beauteous Milcah shall repay the deed,
And thank the conqueror for her father freed :
Take my tried sword.”—“No, royal Saul, I go
In God’s high name alone to meet thy foe,—
Lord of my fathers, hurl the avenging dart,
And strike, through me, the insulting tyrant’s heart !”
David then sought a smooth and pointed stone,
And met Goliah, armed with that alone.
The giant cried, “Is this the warlike chief
For whom his kindred soon will sob with grief?
Pity his gentle limbs with gore be spread !
Pity to harm those ringlets on his head !
Go, simple youth, and dance among the shades,
Wile thy soft hours ’mid Israel’s blooming maids.”—
“Insulting monster ! strength to me is given,
To show the power of Him who reigns in heaven.”
Goliah’s arm was raised, his sword on high,—
David the stone aimed at the monster’s eye ;
It reach’d the brain, and with a dreadful yell,
Upon the plain the dying monster fell:
He cursed the hand which gave the fatal wound,
And writhed in agony upon the ground.
The sever’d head was soon in David’s hand,
He held it forth before the assembled band:
“Kneel,” he then cried, “and all, with loud acclaim,
For Israel freed, praise Heaven’s eternal name ;
His hand alone has laid the monster low,—
People of Israel, to Jehovah bow !”

The hymn of praise was heard, it peal'd on high,
And reached the blessed mansions of the sky ;
The purest incense which we here can give
Warm from the heart, the Eternal will receive.
Then loud the trumpet and the harp was heard,
And Abner sought with joy his royal lord:
" Crown'd with bright laurels, David, thou must meet—
He brings the giant's head to Israel's feet ;
Thy subjects bear him on a conqueror's throne,
And Milcah's hand can pay the youth alone :
Hark ! 'tis thy grateful people's loud acclaim—
David has thousands and ten thousands slain !"—
" Oh, glorious youth ! well hath thy valour won
My daughter's hand,—welcome my noble son !"
But see, my Milcah, on yon brilliant car,
Comes to reward the champion of the war !
Look up, my child, for now thy father's pride
Bestows thee on this youth a peerless bride !"—
" Oh ! dearest father, in thy kindness spare
This cruel gift,—grant Milcah's ardent prayer ;
I cannot wed this wild and bloody chief,—
Oh ! I shall die with agony and grief."
She, fainting, fell.—David towards her flew,
And to his heart the beauteous mourner drew.
" Thy shepherd see ! canst thou his suit deny,
Thou wilt not now the giant's conqueror fly ?"—
" Art thou the hero, thou the warrior youth
Who comest to claim and give thy heart and truth ?

Beloved father, I consent with pride
To be thy champion's chosen, willing bride."—
"Abner, let mirth and music fill the air,
And royal bounty every subject share :
Go to the altar, there let Milcah's hand
Reward the saviour of her father's land.
Then, David, lead her to yon sacred sod,
And all adore the mercy of our God ;
Who raised from Jesse's stem a shepherd youth,
To show His power, His wisdom, and His truth ;
All idol gods upon the flames be thrown,
Jehovah reigns, unbounded, and alone."

FINIS.



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